



Frequently Asked Questions

2020-2021 APIA Scholarship Application Cycle

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General Scholarship Questions

1. What is APIA Scholars?

APIA Scholars, formerly the Asian & Pacific Islander American Scholarship Fund (APIASF), is the nation's largest 501(c)3 non-profit organization that provides college scholarships to Asian and Pacific Islander Americans (APIA) with financial need. Our mission is to make a difference in the lives of APIA students by providing them with resources that increase their access to higher education which serves as the foundation for their future success and contributions to a more vibrant America.

2. What is the APIA Scholarship? What are the eligibility criteria?

The APIA Scholarship is a scholarship dedicated to providing underserved APIA college students funds to support them in their undergraduate education. Supported in partnership with donors nationwide, APIA Scholars has a special focus on those who:

- Live at or below the poverty level, or are otherwise of low socioeconomic status;
- Are the first in their families to attend college;
- Are representative of the APIA community's diversity, (geographically and ethnically}, especially those ethnicities that have been underrepresented on college campuses due to limited access and opportunity; and
- Have placed a strong emphasis on community service and leadership as well as solid academic achievement.

While APIA Scholars has a special focus on those who fall under the categories above, our scholars come from a wide variety of backgrounds, socioeconomic statuses, and APIA ethnicities. The minimum eligibility for the APIA Scholarship is as follows:

- Be of Asian and/or Pacific Islander ethnicity as defined by the U.S. Census
- Be a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident of the United States. Citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau are also eligible to apply
- Be enrolling as an undergraduate student in a U.S. accredited college or university in the Fall of 2020
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale (unweighted) or have earned a GED
- Must apply for federal financial aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Must have one letter of recommendation submitted online by a recommender

Scholarships range in amount from \$2,500 to \$20,000, with some being one-time awards and others being multi-year awards.

3. What is the AANAPISI Scholarship?

The Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) Scholarship Program is a collaboration with AANAPISIs and the communities they serve to provide scholarships, expand institutional capacity and mobilize local resources to help foster economic development. The AANAPISI Scholarship is available annually to students attending APIA Scholars

AANAPISI partner campuses, listed here: <https://apiascholars.org/about/partners/aanapisi-partners/>.

For more information about the AANAPISI Scholarship, including further eligibility criteria and deadlines, please see our website: <https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/aanapisi-scholarship/>.

4. What is the Emergency Fund?

The Macy's Emergency Fund is crisis funding for individuals who have already received the APIA Scholarship/AANAPISI Scholarship. Individuals who have not received funding from APIA Scholars previously are not eligible for the award.

5. When is the APIA Scholarship application open?

The APIA Scholarship application for the 2020-2021 academic year is open from Wednesday, September 4, 2019 to Wednesday, January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST.

6. Where can I access the APIA Scholarship application?

The APIA Scholarship Program application must be completed online and submitted electronically once all of the required questions have been answered. The application is available on our portal: <https://portal.apiasf.org>. You do not have to complete the online application in one sitting. Until you are ready to submit, you may access your application and edit your answers as many times as you like with your login and password from any computer with Internet access. Please note: you should register your portal account under an email you will have access to until at least September 2020.

7. What is the timeline for the APIA Scholarship?

Application Open: September 4, 2019

Application Close: January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST

Finalists Notified and Additional Documentation Requested: Mid-Spring 2020

Scholarship Recipients Notified and Final Documentation Requested: Early Summer 2020

Scholarships Distributed: August 2020

8. What is the award amount of the APIA Scholarship?

The amount of the APIA Scholarships ranges from \$2,500 to \$20,000. This is determined by the particular co-branded scholarship a scholar is awarded.

9. Are the scholarships one-time awards or multi-year awards?

The majority of scholarships are one-time awards, and recipients are welcome to apply to the APIA Scholarship for the following academic year as long as other eligibility criteria are still met. Some scholarships are multi-year awards, either two or four years.

10. What can the scholarship funds be used towards?

The APIA Scholarship must be applied to the Scholar's educational expenses (i.e. the cost of tuition, fees, housing, local transportation, books and allowable living expenses) for the academic year, as billed by the university or college.

11. Do the scholarship funds go directly to the student or the college/university?

Scholarship funds are made payable and mailed directly to the Scholar's university or college. There is no exception to this.

12. Are the scholarships taxable?

The scholarship recipient is responsible for taxes, if any, that may be assessed against your scholarship award. We recommend consulting a tax advisor or financial aid counselor for more guidance. In general, tuition is considerable a non-taxable item.

13. Are there any informational materials that can be distributed about the scholarship?

Yes! Please see our Application Resources page (<https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/resources/>) for our brochure and flyer. Both are available to be disseminated digitally or to be downloaded and printed to whichever group or organization might benefit.

Eligibility Questions

14. What are the eligibility criteria for the APIA Scholarship?

The minimum eligibility for the APIA Scholarship is as follows:

- Be of Asian and/or Pacific Islander ethnicity as defined by the U.S. Census
- Be a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident of the United States. Citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau are also eligible to apply
- Be enrolling as an undergraduate student in a U.S. accredited college or university in the Fall of 2020
- Have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale (unweighted) or have earned a GED
- Must apply for federal financial aid using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- Must have one letter of recommendation submitted online by a recommender

15. How is Asian American and Pacific Islander defined? Can I apply if I identify as biracial/mixed race/mixed ethnicity?

Applicants that self-identify as being Asian and/or Pacific Islander American are eligible to apply, including individuals who are of mixed backgrounds. Please refer to the US Census to determine the ethnicities that would be identified as APIA.

16. Do I have to be a U.S. citizen to receive the APIA Scholarship?

You must be a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident (green card holder) of the United States to apply. Citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau are also eligible to apply.

17. Can I apply if I am an APIA student living in Puerto Rico or the U.S. Virgin Islands?

Yes, as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

18. Can I apply if I'm currently an undergraduate student?

Yes! The APIA Scholarship is available to anyone who will be an undergraduate in the 2020-2021 academic year, whether as a college freshman, junior, etc.

19. Can I apply if I have previously received a scholarship from APIA Scholars (formerly APIASF)?

If you will not already be receiving funding for the 2020-2021 academic year from APIA Scholars, then yes, you may apply as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

20. I attend an AANAPISI partner school – do I have to apply to the AANAPISI Scholarship?

You can apply to just the APIA Scholarship if you wish. However, if you do apply for the AANAPISI Scholarship, you will be given the option to have your AANAPISI Scholarship application considered in the APIA Scholarship application pool. This negates having to apply twice.

21. Can I apply if I am not a first generation college student/first in family college student?

Yes. APIA Scholars welcomes applicants of all family educational backgrounds and we consider many factors when reviewing scholarship applications.

22. Can I apply if I am not receiving any financial aid?

APIA Scholars considers many factors when reviewing scholarship applications. If you meet all eligibility requirements, we encourage you to apply. You do need to apply for the FAFSA for 2020-2021 academic year, even if you will not be receiving any financial aid.

23. Can I apply if my family's income is not at or below the poverty line?

Yes, as long as all eligibility criteria are met. APIA Scholars considers many factors when reviewing scholarship applications, and a student's socioeconomic status is only one part of it.

24. I have not applied to FAFSA yet for the next academic year. Can I still apply?

Yes, as long as you intend to apply for FAFSA for the 2020-2021 academic year by early March 2020. Applicants who are selected as finalists will be expected to submit their FAFSA Student Aid Report (SAR) in mid-spring when they are notified and will need to have their SAR before then.

25. Can I apply if I am a graduate student?

No. At this time, APIA Scholars only offers scholarships to students that are enrolling in an undergraduate program.

26. Can I apply if I am a continuing education student?

As long as you will be a degree-seeking undergraduate student in Fall 2020 and meet all other eligibility criteria, yes. You must be pursuing your first undergraduate degree.

27. Can I apply if I will graduate from my undergraduate program in December 2020?

Yes, you can still apply. If you were selected as a scholar, we would communicate with the school that your funds need to be used in full during the fall semester.

28. Can I apply if I am an international student studying in the U.S.?

You must be a citizen, national, or legal permanent resident (green card holder) of the United States to apply. Citizens of the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and the Republic of Palau are also eligible to apply.

29. Can I apply if I am attending/plan to attend a community college/junior college?

Yes. APIA Scholars welcomes individuals attending or planning to attend community college or junior college, as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

30. Can I apply if I have a GED, not a high school diploma?

Yes, as long as you either currently have your GED or will receive your GED by May 2020, you are welcome to apply if all other eligibility criteria are met.

31. Can I apply if I am attending vocational school?

Students that have the GED equivalent are eligible to apply as long they meet all other eligibility criteria.

32. Can I apply if I am pursuing my second bachelor's degree?

No. At this time our scholarships are only available to students pursuing their first undergraduate degree.

33. Can I apply if I am attending both high school and community college?

If you will receive your high school diploma (or GED) by May 2020, then yes, as long as all other eligibility criteria are met.

34. I did not enter college right after high school/I started my bachelor's degree program but had to be out of college for some time. Am I eligible to apply?

Yes, as long as all other eligibility criteria are met. Many of our scholars have taken breaks as they have pursued their degree. Many have not pursued their undergraduate degree until many years after completing high school.

35. Can I apply if I plan on taking mostly online college courses?

No. A majority of your courses must be taught in-person.

36. I don't any extracurricular activities and/or work experience – can I still apply?

Yes. APIA Scholars considers many factors when reviewing scholarship applications. Please take time in essay 3 of the application to explain why you have no extracurricular activities and/or work experience to list. We understand not everyone is able to have extracurricular activities and/or work experience, and APIA Scholars considers many factors when reviewing scholarship applications.

Application Questions

37. My portal account is not activated – what do I do?

Please send an email to applicant@apiascholars.org with the subject: Portal Account Not Activated, and include your full name and the email you registered your account with in the body of the email. We will assist you as soon as possible.

38. What documents do I have to submit for the APIA Scholarship application?

For the initial application, you only need to have a recommender submit a letter of recommendation for you through the portal.

If you are selected as a finalist, you will be asked to submit additional documentation, including your most recent transcript.

Any documents sent to APIA Scholars before they are expressly asked for by APIA Scholars will be disregarded.

39. My high school does not use a 4.0 GPA scale – what do I put for my GPA?

If you are a high school senior, you should ask your counselor to convert your unweighted GPA to a 4.0 scale. You may also refer to the College Board scale found here:

<http://www.collegeboard.com/html/academicTracker-howtoconvert.html>.

If you are a college student (including a freshman), please put your graduating high school GPA.

40. I do not know where I'll be going to college next fall – what do I put in the application?

We ask that you list your first choice college or one of the colleges you are considering in this section. We understand that most students do not know at this point in time. The institution you plan to attend will not affect how your application is reviewed.

41. I am not sure what my major/intended career will be - what do I put in my application?

If you do not know what you will be majoring in, or if you are currently undeclared, please select "Undecided" from the drop down menu.

For intended career, put what you are most strongly interested in pursuing and the general professional industry/field that falls under.

We realize these things might change over the course of a few months. Those who are selected as finalists will be asked again what their major and intended careers plans are.

42. I don't have any extracurricular activities and/or work experience – what should I do?

Having extracurricular activities and/or work experience is not required, and APIA Scholars looks at many factors when reviewing scholarship applications. Please take time in the third essay to explain why you do not have any extracurricular activities and/or work experience.

43. How long do the essay answers on the application have to be? Do I have to answer each essay question?

You have up to 500 words per essay to answer each question. While there is no minimum word count, please note you should take more than few sentences per question to thoughtfully answer each. The essays are an important part of the application, and the area where APIA Scholars is best able to understand who you are as a whole person.

You must answer every part of each essay question.

44. I submitted my application but there's an error/typo - can I fix it?

You are able to log into your account at <https://portal.apiasf.org> and edit any of your application information, including essays up until the 5:00 PM ET deadline on January 22, 2020.

45. How do I know if my application was received?

All applications marked 100% complete on the dashboard, with recommendation letters submitted, have been received by APIA Scholars.

46. How do I know if my application is fully complete?

You will receive an email notifying you when your recommender has submitted their recommendation letter. You can check your dashboard at any time to see if your application is marked 100% complete.

47. Can I submit my application after the deadline?

No. The application has a firm deadline of January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST. Any application, including recommendation letter, that is not completed in full by that time will be automatically disqualified.

48. English is not my first language and I am worried this will hurt my chances - are there any resources to help me?

APIA Scholars encourages you to talk to your school, college counselor, or a trusted teacher/instructor. We understand the difficulty that many of our communities face in learning English and take that into consideration as we review our applications.

Please see our Application Resources for some tips on creating a strong application: <https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/resources/>.

49. Are there any application resources?

Please see our Application Resources page for an application guide, tips for a strong application, as well as guidance that can be sent to recommenders for letters of recommendation: <https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/resources/>.

Recommendation Letters/Recommenders

50. How are recommendation letters submitted?

Recommendation letters are only accepted online via our portal as a part of the application: <https://portal.apiasf.org>. In Step 1 of the application, applicants will enter the contact information of their recommender. It is very important to put in the correct email address for the recommender. Emails are automatically sent to the recommender, asking them to register in the portal, login, and complete the recommendation form for the particular applicant. If the applicant put in the incorrect email address (including using a different version of a recommender's email), the recommender will not be able to see the recommendation form.

51. Who can write a recommendation letter?

Your recommender should be someone who can speak to your character and your leadership abilities. Teachers/instructors, counselors, advisors, religious leaders, work supervisors, coaches, or volunteer supervisors are all possible people to ask. Your recommender cannot be a relative or friend.

52. How will I know if my recommender submitted their letter?

You will receive an email when your recommender has submitted the recommendation letter. Please note your recommender must submit their recommendation letter before the deadline of January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST. Late recommendation letters are not accepted.

53. My recommender has not received an email about submitting the recommendation letter in the portal, what should I do?

Make sure they have checked their spam folders for an email from programs@portal.apiasf.org. If there is still no email, please have them reach out to APIA Scholars at applicant@apiascholars.org, asking them to include your name in the email. They can also create an account themselves, but the email they register with must match exactly with what you input in Step 1 of the application.

54. I am a recommender and/My recommender says there is no recommendation letter showing up on the dashboard. What should I/they do?

Recommenders should reach out directly to APIA Scholars at applicant@apiascholars.org, including the applicant's name and recommender email address in the body of the message. We will assist in fixing the issue.

55. How can I change my recommender?

You should avoid changing your recommender if possible, and think thoughtfully before you put in the recommender's information. You must put in your recommender's information in Step 1 in order to advance to the next step of the application, but you can always return to Step 1 and change your recommender (you will be prompted to confirm the change). Please note that all recommendation letters must be received by January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST, so if you must change your recommender, do not wait until the last minute.

56. Can the recommendation letter be submitted after the deadline?

No. The deadline for submitting recommendation letters is the same as the application deadline: January 22, 2020 at 5PM EST. Any application without a recommendation letter after that time will be considered incomplete and disqualified.

57. Is there any guidance for recommenders?

Yes, please refer to our Guidance for Recommenders document located on our Application Resources page: <https://apiascholars.org/scholarship/resources/>.

My question was not answered in this FAQ - what should I do?

Please email info@apiascholars.org, providing in as much detail as possible the question you have/issue you are experiencing. We are receiving a high level of emails and phone calls, and will respond to your inquiry as quickly as we are able.

Please do not send us multiple emails or phone calls as this slows down our ability to respond as quickly as possible to inquiries.